

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S2095-9273(18)30073-2

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scib.2018.02.009>

Reference: SCIB 339

To appear in: *Science Bulletin*



Please cite this article as: H. Wang, Perfect timing: a Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for circadian clocks, *Science Bulletin* (2018), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scib.2018.02.009>

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Perfect timing: a Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for circadian clocks

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On October 2, 2017, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Jeffrey Hall and Michael Rosbash of Brandeis University, and Michael Young of Rockefeller University, the three circadian biology trailblazers, for unraveling molecular genetic mechanisms of circadian rhythms. The three Nobel laureates completed their prize-winning works largely 20 to 30 years ago. Yet, this Noble Prize came with perfect timing: on the one hand, it can be rooted back to Chinese peculiar and shrewd observations and practices in ancient times as well as some groundbreaking experiments in the history of biology; on the other hand, it implicates far-reaching and pervasive impacts, particularly promising to offer potential therapeutic approaches for numerous dysrhythmia-based diseases or health problems derived from rapidly changing human lifestyles in the modern society. Further, the seminal discovery of the molecular genetic time-keeping mechanisms of life, pioneered by the trios and many others in the circadian biology field, stands as one of the most exciting, heroic and inspiring stories in the history of biology, arguably of modern sciences.

This Nobel Prize is certainly a pleasant surprise as the three laureates were all caught off guard during their Nobel interviews. As a matter of fact, for their contributions to elucidating molecular genetic mechanisms underlying circadian rhythms, the trios have been collecting international prizes and awards, including the Gruber Prize in

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